

Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council  
Smyrna Rest Stop  
5500 DuPont Parkway  
Smyrna, DE 19977  
Meeting Minutes September 10, 2018  
10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

Members Present: Suzanne Howell, Vice Chair, Darryl Garner, Member, Blake Roberts, Member, Jacqueline Poquette, Member, teleconference, Patricia Burrell, Member, Elisha Jenkins, Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI), Sandi Miller, DVI, Shirley Bryson, DVI, Deb Bradl, DVI, Jill Morrison, DVI, Julie Fedele, DOR Sunset Review Committee, Sonya Lawrence, Public, teleconference, Kevin McAllister, Public, teleconference, Khalil Abdul-Majid, Public, Grisel Espinosa, DVI, Lisa Edmondson, DVI

There was not a quorum present.

Old Business:

White Cane Safety Day 2018

DVI will support White Cane Safety Day 2018.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) wished to work in tandem with DVI to develop White Cane Safety Day 2018.

Darryl Garner is collaborating with Melodye May at DVI to develop programs for White Cane Safety Day 2018.

Action Item: Elisha Jenkins, Director of DVI, will email Darryl Garner vendor information.

DVI will offer an Assistive Technology Resource Fair October 18, 2018 at Delaware Technical Community College. Vendor applications and community resources are currently being accepted.

Award presentations for White Cane Safety Day 2018 were discussed.

At a separate event, DVI will host an annual Champions Breakfast to honor our business partners.

The annual report was discussed. Deb Bradl is working on the annual report. The previous Chair of the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) was coordinating with Deb Bradl to develop the annual report for 2017. The goal is to ensure that all requirements for 2018 are met as well.

Update on Kevin McAllister and Sonya Lawrence reappointments to the committee: Ray Lewis from the Governor's Office of Board and Commissions contacted Suzanne Howell, Vice Chair, and informed her that Kevin McAllister and Sonya Lawrence will be reappointed to the Council.

The CSNA has been completed and forwarded to Kevin McAllister. A copy will be forwarded to Suzanne Howell, Vice Chair.

New Business:

DVI Director's Report

Blind Entrepreneurs Program:

The healthy vending analysis for FY/18 close-out (July 2017 – June 2018) was completed during this reporting period. The analysis showed that June 2018 provided the highest increase in sales for the Fiscal Year

at 2,175 units, or an increase of 25% with 40% healthy vending options stocked in all BEP unassigned locations throughout the state.

The Blind Vendors participated in training on implementing healthy vending. Several resources and comparative data were shared and discussed. Initial outlook suggests Delaware is on the cutting edge of implementation.

#### Independent Living Services:

The Independent Living Unit and Vocational Rehabilitation Unit within the Division collaborated on the Summer Skills Academy that was held from July 9 through July 20 at Blindsight Delaware. Eight campers participated in various activities including lessons in clothing and money management, food preparation skills, career exploration, and orientation and mobility. The University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Program also visited campers where they learned about healthy eating and making smart food choices. Art Therapy Express provided activities that included painting and clay sculpture creation, while PAWS for People visited the camp to provide pet therapy to the participants. The campers also participated in a variety of field trips including the Franklin Institute, the National Aquarium, and the Delaware Rock Gym. On the last day a graduation celebration occurred and the students were recognized for their accomplishments. In addition, DVI recognized graduates and interns at the celebration.

After the recognition ceremony, the Division hosted its first Family Fun Event for DVI consumers and their guests. Registration topped 145 for this Backyard BBQ that included yard games, board games, and music played by a visually impaired DJ.

The National Federation of the Blind conducted a summer youth workshop from July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 10<sup>th</sup> at Blindsight Delaware. The

camp was designed to promote Braille enrichment through literacy and learning. As a result of this training, the participants formed social bonds, functional skills and the confidence to live more independently.

The Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC) staff from Mississippi State University provided the Division's Independent Living Skills staff, other program service providers, and community stakeholders and administrators with a four-day technical and training assistance session August 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. The technical assistance portion of the training focused on developing strategies for the Division's programs to operate more efficiently and effectively through disciplines such as financial management, data collection, successful on-boarding practices, and creating SMART goals. Additional training is being planned to continue in September in which a representative from the OIB-TAC project will present a two-day course in low vision.

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) held its first public forum to obtain public feedback as the Council prepares to write the 2020 – 2022 State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

#### Consumer Satisfaction Survey:

DVI revised its consumer satisfaction survey this period. A parent survey to gauge satisfaction has been developed for the Education Program. This tool will measure communication, responsiveness, and the Teacher for the Visually Impaired involvement in the Individualized Education Program.

#### Legislation:

The Division is grateful to a stakeholder for ensuring Teachers for the Visually Impaired are included in the loan forgiveness benefit for educators.

### Preparation 2020 Budget:

The Division is preparing for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2020 budget effective July 1, 2019. The Division will be requesting contractual dollars to support the Vocational Rehabilitation program to ensure the unfunded mandate of Pre-Employment Transition Services does not cause a waitlist.

### Sunset Process:

The Division will be engaged in the Sunset Review process beginning in the fall. The agency will attend the orientation on September 12, 2018. The agency will share the date of the hearing once available.

### Communication and Outreach:

The Division's Facebook page continues to increase awareness for individuals with vision-related needs. Currently, staff are coordinating the filming of informational videos regarding services offered through the Division's Vocational Rehabilitation Unit. As this progresses, updates will be provided in future reports.

### Other items:

Sandi Miller was introduced as the new Deputy Director of DVI. Sandi stated that anyone is welcome to reach out to her if they feel she can contribute.

Darryl Garner asked if Braille will be put on the vending machines.

Khalil Abdul-Majid asked if the vending machines accept TANF and SNAP. The response was no, the machines do not accept TANF and SNAP.

Darryl Garner commented that the local hospitals could use the help of DVI for sensitivity training in orientation and mobility. As a patient

Darryl realized the hospital did not understand how to help the visually impaired and suggested that the agency reach out to the local hospitals and offer sensitivity training.

#### District Administrator's Report

As of 9/7/18, DVI Vocational Rehabilitation current caseload is 268 with 35 individuals employed.

State Goals and Priorities: Increase the quantity of quality employment outcomes and quantity of quality employment outcomes by 15% from the prior fiscal year.

Newly developed partnerships: Christiana Skating Center, First State Bowling, Barefoot Alpaca Farm, Barefoot Studio, Always Best Care and WSFS Bank.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program received funding to send 12 transition students to Space Camp.

Currently, 169 students aged 14-20 are on the registry. 84 of the 169 are in the education program. The September 30<sup>th</sup> count will be reviewed for potentially eligible students for the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

A Technology Fair will be held in October. The consumer base will be encouraged to attend.

A consumer telephone survey was conducted for individuals closed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Fiscal Year 2018. Nine individuals were contacted, three participated in the survey. The findings are as follows

- 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the timeliness of service.
- 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the quality of services.

- 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the Vocational Rehabilitation team.
- 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the communication and reports from the Vocational Rehabilitation team.
- 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied with the Vocational Rehabilitation provider services. 1 respondent stated that they did not receive provider services and they were neutral.
- 100% of the respondents thought the overall services from the Vocational Rehabilitation program were excellent.

DVI's Champions Breakfast is in the planning stage. This breakfast will celebrate our business partners.

Vocational Rehabilitation hosted the NCC Summer Youth program for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. Two summer youth worked at the agency with the various professionals that provide services to the blind and visually impaired.

DVI was provided with special employment slots for their students from City of Wilmington and New Castle County Summer Youth Programs. Eight students were actively involved with NCC and Wilmington Summer Youth Program.

Transition Services: Ten students participated in Summer Skills Academy.

Envision Level-Up Program: Five students attended the Envision Level-Up Program in Wichita, Kansas. They each received a laptop of their choice after completion of the program.

Project Search: DVI has its first student referred and actively participating with Project Search. Project Search is a business-led, school to work program for high school transition students in their final

year of school. The students acquire competitive, marketable and transferrable skills. This enables them to apply for positions relative to those learned during their internships.

**Mentoring Programs:** Currently the Division is working on providing two mentoring programs for college-age and high school students. As the contracts are finalized with these two agencies, the Council will be updated.

**Porter State Service Center Collaboration – Governor’s Initiative:** DVI is involved in the Governor’s Initiative to bring services to the Porter State Service Center to serve the core of the City of Wilmington. The Vocational Rehabilitation unit will be providing services in this area. The goal is to provide employment services for the blind and visually impaired in that area.

**Partnership in Policy Making:** Currently we have two individuals participating in Partnership in Policy Making. This is an innovative leadership training program that teaches people to be community leaders and is designed for parents raising young or school aged children with a developmental disability. The program provides up-to-date information, education and skill building activities about the legislative process and local, state, and national issues that affect individuals with disabilities.

**Announcements:**

The VRAC members decided to continue to meet on the second Monday of every month.

**Public Comment:** Kevin McAllister suggested that the Council should get involved with the Sunset process and to align as a Council. The Council should get input from advocates and consumers regarding the Sunset process.

Public Comment: Kevin McAllister brought up then White Cane Safety Day 2018 awards presented by the Council. Darryl Garner will coordinate awards with Melodye May from DVI.

Public Comment: It was suggested that the Council should attempt to bring in outside persons to speak at the Council meetings and training should be made available addressing the function of the Council.

The next Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) meeting will be held on October 8, 2018 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Edmondson, DVI